Conduct of WLL Players

*415. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per Cellular Operators Association of India, WLL companies are misleading the public;

(b) if so, whether the COAI has urged Government and TRAI to check role of the players of WLL who are cheating the public;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the concrete plans formulated to check the role of the WLL players?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) had complained to Government and Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) that one basic service operator is indulging in mis-informing public by giving full page advertisements in national dailies proclaiming that they will be offering free all India roaming. Also that another basic service operator is providing limited mobility facility beyond its licensed service area of Delhi.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) sought comments of M/s. Tata Teleservices Ltd. and M/s. Reliance Infocom Ltd. TRAI has thereafter noted that M/s. Tata Teleservices Ltd. are making efforts to control the radio frequency spillage beyond Delhi Short Distance Charging Area (SDCA) and they will be constantly monitoring the situation to control and minimize the radio frequency spillage. TRAI has further emphasized that M/s. Tata Teleservices should offer WLL (MOBILE) service within the SDCA area. M/s. Reliance Infocom Ltd. responded by stating that they have stopped advertisments referring to roaming services.

A meeting was held by the Government with the basic service operators and cellular mobile service operators in New Delhi on 14.2.2003. In the meeting, M/s. Reliance Infocom Ltd. informed that the advertisement referring to roaming service will be withdrawn. Since then, no such advertisment has been reported.

TRAI has also asked all Basic Service Operators and Cellular Mobile Service operators to ensure service provision within their service area in accordance with their respective licence conditions.

SHRI ABANI ROY: Sir, I am happy that the Government has already taken the initiative and there was a meeting held on 14.2.2003. But this type of advertisements sometimes misleads the people. So, the Government should take the initiative that no such advertisement should come in that way. This has to be notified by the Government so that this does not mislead the people.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, that is a good suggestion. Sir, it was at our initiative and also because of the complaint of the Cellular Operators Association that the advertisement of one company which had promised roaming, was then withdrawn. They assured us in the meeting straightaway. As far as the other company is concerned, that is, the Tatas, one complaint was made that their radio signal was available outside the short-distance charging area and Mr. Irani said that he would immediately make sure that the pillars and the towers are withdrawn into the centre of the SDCA, so that the signal does not go beyond. And we have not received any complaint after that.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Sir, my specific question is, when the BSNL has started the mobile service, a big momentum and response has come from the country, especially from my State. But what is happening is, at the same time, big advertisements of private companies are going on and there is an acute shortage of SIM Cards of BSNL mobile service. Still two months have been taken for getting the registration and SIM Cards. So, what is the reason for the acute shortage of SIM Cards and, will the Government take immediate steps to rectify the defect?

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, this matter was brought to my attention. I have requested a complete report from the Managing Director of BSNL, but actually speaking, it is not so much the shortage of SIM Cards which is the problem; the problem is the money that has to be invested for extending this service by putting in the infrastructure, which is really a bottleneck at this time. And as we are able to get the switches and construct towers, we will certainly expand the services very swiftly.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, I think this issue is more complicated. It is not only about advertisement. The issue is that the WLL service providers are not having a licence for providing mobile services. What some of these private operators are doing, they are actually offering, what you call a multiple registration and which has call forwarding facilities thereby, though the TRAI was very specific that their services will have to be distinctly different from the mobile services, in the sense, that they should operate within a short-distance charging area. They are, in fact, through this offer of multiple registration, actually offering national roaming services. Is the Minister aware of that? And as the licensor, what is the role of the Government, because more than the TRAI, the role of the licensor will come in, as the original license was issued by the licensor, that is, the Government of India?

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, this is a very important matter. This is precisely the dispute which is now being heard by the judge and other members of the TDSAT and the Government is one of the parties in that which has to give its own statement. I am not sure whether you would want the something which is *sub judice* and the matter of current proceedings going on in the TDSAT to be discussed in the House. But the points that Mr. Basu has raised with his thorough knowledge on multiple registration, on call forwarding, on whether the same handset can or cannot be used, these are precisely the four or five points which have been agitated before the TDSAT at this moment.

SHRI NOLOTPAL BASU: Sir, you must protect us. Sir, the Government as a licensor is also answerable to Parliament and therefore if the Minister .... (Interruptions)

श्री सभापति: आपका क्वश्चन हो गया।

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: I am prepared to discuss this, but the question does not arise in this matter.

*416. [The questioner (Dr. Dasari Narayana Rao) was absent for answer *vide* page 68—70 *infra*.]